

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

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A system and method for accessing the Internet on a per-time basis, through an Internet service provider (ISP), includes an access station. Application software is provided to an electronic terminal, from which Internet access may be attempted. Upon initiation of the application, the access station is dialed, and a number of processing steps serve as a precondition to permitting the electronic terminal to access the Internet through the Internet service provider. In particular, upon an initial attempt to access the Internet, the access station sets up an account in which the telephone number from which access is attempted is utilized for subsequent billing purposes. The access station further determines whether the telephone number from which access is desired is within an acceptable network, is associated with an undesirable credit risk, and is a valid telephone number. In the event the electronic terminal passes these validation procedures, the access station transmits account information to the electronic terminal and directly to the Internet service provider. Additionally, the access station transmits an ISP identifier (such as a modem telephone number) whereupon the electronic terminal initiates a communications link with the Internet service provider. Once the link with the Internet service provider is established, the electronic terminal transmits the established account information to the Internet service provider, whereupon the Internet service provider compares the transmitted account information with account information received from the access station. Then Internet access is granted. The Internet service provider monitors the time associated with Internet access and transmits that time information to the access station. The access station uses that time information, applies a corresponding charge, and associates the resulting charges with an account associated with the telephone number from which access is desired, such

as by placing the Internet access charges directly on an invoice associated with usage of the telephone line associated with the telephone number from which access is achieved.

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